



# CAPSTONE

UWL COLLEGE OF LIBERAL STUDIES NEWSLETTER

INSPIRING | ACHIEVING | UNITING

SPRING 2016

The background of the cover features several iridescent, colorful shells or stones scattered across a light surface. The colors range from vibrant blues and purples to warm oranges and yellows, creating a visually rich and textured backdrop.

# Arts Illuminating Science

EXPLORING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND LIBERAL STUDIES



# Q&A

## WITH CLS DEAN JULIA JOHNSON

### 1. Looking back on the first nine months as Dean, what have been your major priorities?

My major priorities have been to learn about the needs and concerns of our students, staff, faculty, alumni and community partners. We've also further developed our messaging about the important work we do every day to prepare students to be successful professionals, engaged citizens and community leaders. These priorities have taken multiple forms, such as:

- » Implementing a strategic planning process driven by a committee of faculty, staff and students. The committee has conducted listening sessions with students, alumni, community partners, units and campus leaders and CLS departments. The committee has submitted recommendations that the Dean's Office staff will use to establish action items over the next three to five years.
- » Meeting with community members and local businesses about the intersection of their interests and the work done in the college. Jay Lokken and I organized a "Meet the Dean"

event last fall, hosted at The Pump House. Faculty and students attended to highlight the great work being done in the CLS. Joe Anderson, the Director of Creative Imperatives, and I attended a Downtown Rotary meeting to share information about this year's Creative Imperatives Festival — The Intersection of Art and Science. We were greeted with generosity and interest in college initiatives.

- » Revising our public messaging. One of our faculty fellows, Marie Moeller, has lead our effort to revise our CLS brochure and is working with student interns to revamp our Web messaging. In all messaging, we highlight how our degree programs prepare students for successful professional and personal lives. We share employer research that indicates four of five surveyed employers agree all students should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences, and that peak earnings for humanities and social science graduates outpace professional and pre-professional graduates by \$2,500 per year (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2014).

### 2. Looking forward, what are some of the next action items for the CLS?

We are looking forward to implementing recommendations from our strategic planning group, which focus on action items related to enhancing our connections with the community, providing additional faculty and staff professional development opportunities, connecting with alumni, and further enhancing student needs. We will communicate the report and recommendations soon.

### 3. What do you most enjoy about your job?

I work with remarkable people. The faculty and staff in the college are top-notch. I've worked at public and private institutions across the U.S. and the faculty and staff at UWL are as passionate, dedicated, talented and engaging as anyone with whom I've ever had the pleasure to work. Our students are smart, curious and earnest—they seek out internship and research opportunities, and speak highly of our faculty and staff. It is humbling to learn from such smart and humane people. I believe in

the people who make up this college. It is my goal to assist them in achieving their professional goals.

### 4. CLS's connections to larger communities (i.e. La Crosse and beyond, global communities, communities of learning) are clearly a high priority for the college. What is the importance of those connections and why is it a focus?

Universities are communities within communities. We have rich opportunities to reach out, invite in and partner with varying external communities. CLS students have always learned inside and outside traditional classrooms. Faculty have always gone beyond campus walls to learn, think and teach. Community partners provide connections that are integral to our mission and we have considerable talents to share.

# FEATURES



## 8 ARTS + SCIENCE

The third annual UWL Creative Imperatives Festival explored intersections of arts and science



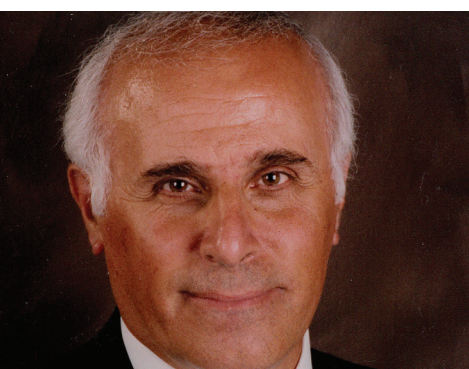
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UWL Assistant Professor of Art Kate Hawkes comments on the environment's future through her photography



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UWL author explores Latina/o college student leadership



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Originally from Israel, Sam Sambar created a new life in Wisconsin and is now helping other international students do the same

## CLS Vision Statement

Championing the enduring values of the liberal arts and positioning them as key to transforming people, ideas and the world.

# 2015 TIMELINE

## HIGHLIGHTING CLS OUTREACH



### FEBRUARY

**Poli Sci/Pub Admin Madison Alum:**  
Every spring, UWL Political Science/ Public Administration alums, professors, current students, and state politicians gather in Madison to network.



### APRIL

**Hear, Here:**  
Students in Assistant Professor Ariel Beaujot's history class launch "Hear, Here," a downtown La Crosse oral history project.



### MAY

**Lady in Blue:**  
Mary and the late Gary Veldey generously donated this unique Lasansky print to be displayed in the Center for Fine Arts lobby. Associate Professor of Art Jennifer Terpstra has known the donors for over a decade; Professor of Art Joel Elgin was a printmaking student of Lasansky's at the University of Iowa.

### MARCH

**Theatre Gala:**  
UWL's Theatre Arts Department held its yearly gala in March 2015—this event functions as a celebration of accomplishments and a scholarship fundraiser for theatre arts students.

### MARCH

**Creative Imperatives:**  
Artists and speakers bring the community to campus for the second annual Creative Imperatives festival.

### APRIL

**Evening of Excellence Awards:**  
CLS welcomes the community to an Evening of Excellence, honoring outstanding students, staff and faculty.





## JULY

### New CLS Dean:

Julia Johnson begins as CLS Dean, with a vision of advancing the community's understanding of the value of liberal arts.



## OCTOBER

### Music Gala:

Franco Pomponi, a world-renowned baritone, returned to La Crosse to teach UWL students and give a public performance. Read more about Pomponi on page 15.



## NOVEMBER

### Arts and Comm Day:

High school students visited La Crosse, met current UWL students and faculty, and learned what makes UWL the place to be an arts and communication student.

## JUNE

### Artspire:

UWL Department of Theatre Arts faculty and students put on a production of "Chicago" during the downtown La Crosse arts festival.

## SEPTEMBER

### Hispanic Heritage Month:


UWL marked the national celebration of Hispanic culture and history with a series of presentations, discussions, films, and more on campus and at locations in the community.

## OCTOBER

### Kate Hawkes Photography Exhibit:

Kate Hawkes had a public exhibit in Chicago, at Gallery 19, showcasing her newest collection of work, "Anthropocene." See page 10 for more on Hawkes' art.





*“Bluffs,” by UWL student Braley Quall, is one of the images in an online anthology for the La Crosse River marsh and Hixon Forest. UWL students selected poems and prose excerpts in the collection to go along with student art and a brief analysis linking the literature to La Crosse parks and trails.*

# ‘BETWEEN RIVER AND SKY’

## Project combines literature, art, community

Environmental and art enthusiasts alike have a unique College of Liberal Studies class project to thank for providing insight into a popular environmental area.

“Between River and Sky: A UWL Ecocritical Literary Anthology for Myrick Park, the La Crosse Marsh and Hixon Forest” is an online collection of writings and art by students released last fall. Poems and prose excerpts in the collection are accompanied by student art and a brief analysis linking the literature to La Crosse parks and trails.

Students from Assistant Professor Kelly Sultzbach’s environmental literature course and Associate Lecturer Misha Bolstad’s advance graphic design course created the collection. They worked with the La Crosse Parks and Recreation Department, Outdoor Recreation Alliance and Friends of the

Marsh to capture sights and scripts.

The works were highlighted during a literary hike on a Saturday morning in October. Students who worked on the project — Zachary Allen, Ellie Brown, Sarah Mueller, Dan Sheridan and Taylor Parrish — led a group through the La Crosse River marsh to hear and experience the works.

“The title of the anthology, ‘Between River and Sky,’ is meant to evoke La Crosse’s unique sense of place, nestled between the Mississippi River which has been so vital to the historical development of La Crosse and the sublime heights of the windy bluffs,” explains Sultzbach. “Symbolically, [the students] also thought the images of river and sky would remind us of the tensions between, on the one hand, an on-the-ground approach to realistic environmental issues and economical concerns, and on the

other hand, our ability to imagine new ethical frameworks that would allow us to gain empathy for a more-than-human community and envision innovative solutions for some of our most pressing environmental questions.”

Sultzbach attended a workshop offered through UWL’s Undergraduate Research and Creativity office and the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning. The workshop was part of a Regent’s Research, Economic Development and Innovation grant to embed this undergraduate research experience into her course.

The design and images on the website highlight the ecocritical literary work to help the viewer “gain empathy for the more than human community and persuade those involved to actively consider the environmental concerns of La Crosse,” says Bolstad.



Take the hike at [www.betweenriverandsky.org](http://www.betweenriverandsky.org)



*Assistant Professor of History, Kenneth Shonk, has a lot of plans for developing Irish connections.*

# Irish Blessing

## Campus conference links professor, Shamrock Society

A regional professional conference at UWL has helped forge a stronger relationship between the History Department and the La Crosse Shamrock Club.

When local Irish enthusiasts heard about the Midwest Conference for Irish Studies meeting on campus last fall, they naturally wanted to attend. They asked the group's president, Assistant Professor of History Kenneth Shonk, if they could take part in the event for Irish Studies professionals.

"From that point, I have maintained continuous contact with the organization," says Shonk. "We have significant plans to combine our energies to develop new and exciting projects."

### AMONG THE PLANS:

- » Presentations by Shonk at the club's monthly meetings. He gave his first talk in February on Irish women's fashion in the 1930s.
- » The first Irish Film Festival, set for campus in April. The film marks the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising.
- » A lecture series by Shonk on the 1916 Easter Rising during this fall's La Crosse Irish Fest.
- » A visual display of the 1916 Easter Rising during fall's Irish Fest. Shonk and Assistant Professor of English Lindsay Steiner will be teaching a course for UWL students at National University Ireland in Galway in

May. For their final project, students will construct the display marking significant places and people involved in the rising.

Shonk specializes in world history and social studies education. He has fostered a relationship with the Consulate General of Ireland to fund most of the plans.

The conference, the first at UWL for the organization, was impressive. Around 90 Irish scholars attended, making enough money to help fund future conferences. Currently, organizers are in discussion about putting UWL in a regular rotation to host the conference every few years.



To get involved, contact Shonk at [kshonk@uwlax.edu](mailto:kshonk@uwlax.edu)



Sumpei Yamaki



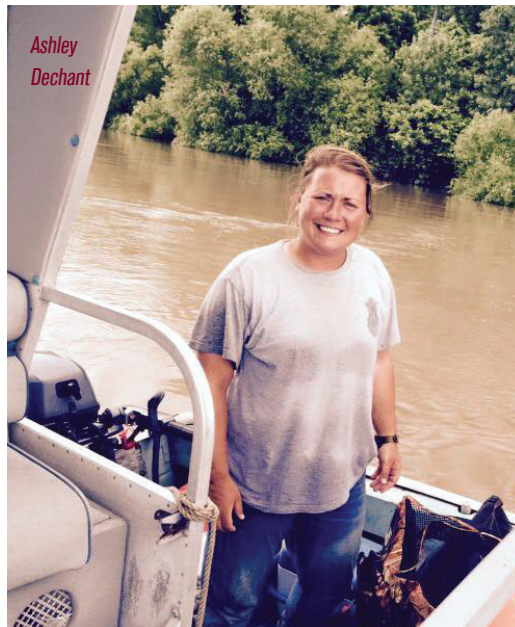
Barret Klein

# ARTS + SCIENCE

School of Arts and Communication third annual UWL Creative Imperatives Festival explores intersections of arts, science



Margaret Wertheim



Ashley Dechant



Ted Louis Levy



[Click here](#) to see Creative Imperatives photo essay



**M**ore than 30 events demonstrated how arts and science collide at the third annual Creative Imperatives Festival, Feb. 28-March 1.

Sessions explored the art behind biology, the anatomy of singing, the geometry of a crocheted coral reef and more. All events showcased the work of UWL students, faculty, staff and special guests.

Assistant Professor of Biology Barrett Klein worked with community members and students from the La Crosse School District to sculpt, mold and cast objects from nature — demonstrating how art can aid scientists in seeing and understanding the world.

“People tend to either respect one or the other or show preference for one over the other,” says Klein about science and art. “If there isn’t equal value and respect shown for the humanities and the arts, as well as the sciences, then as a culture we are in trouble.”

**Click here**  
to see Klein work with students

### SPECIAL GUESTS LEAD INTERACTIVE SESSIONS

UWL welcomed six nationally and internationally recognize guests for the festival including Emmy-award-winning artist Ted Louis Levy; UWL Alum Shumpei Yamaki, '00, a professional potter and dancer; and Margaret Wertheim, of the Institute for Figuring, a Los Angeles-based non-profit.

Levy is known for his work on Broadway and around the world.

*The New York Times* describes Levy as “deceptively traditional in his footwork as a crooning host and all-around entertainer.” He spent two weeks with UWL’s theatre cast to put together the tap dancing for the musical “Singin’ in the Rain.”

**Click here**  
to see the cast prepare for the show

“I’ve grown more in these two weeks than in the last couple of years,” says sophomore Avital Maltinski — who played Kathy Seldon — in reference to her work with Levy.

Yamaki combined interpretive dance and ceramics in one fluid performance during the festival. The resident artist with the Scattergood

**Click here**  
to read more on Yamaki

Friends School and Farm in Iowa also shared his life story. Yamaki lives in the moment and lets that direct his course — just as he does with his pottery and dance.

“I feel strongly about being in the moment and I’d like to show students that if you feel honestly and intuitively in the moment, life is going to turn out OK,” he says.

Wertheim shared how crochet skills combined with geometry can be used to re-create coral reefs. She also led a coral reef crocheting workshop. A “UW-La Crosse School Reef” will be developed by the campus

**Click here**  
to read more on Wertheim

community over the next year and be displayed in spring 2017 at Creative Imperatives.

### UWL JUNIOR DOCUMENTS MISSISSIPPI RIVER JOURNEY

During the festival, students also shared their talents. UWL junior Ashley Dechant led a discussion after an hour-long screening of a documentary she created about her journey down the Mississippi River in a fishing boat from St. Paul to New Orleans. Dechant, a photography minor, documented the lives of people on the Mississippi through hundreds of photos, videos and audio recordings with help from a UWL Undergraduate Research and Creativity grant.

Dechant battled rainstorms, floods and detours onto diverse waterways, but these challenges introduced her to quality people who make their lives on the Mississippi.

“It could have been a not so great trip. But every stop I made, I met nothing but amazing people — people who will do anything for you — people who look out for each other and take care of each other,”

**Click here**  
to read more on Dechant

she says. “The community on the river — there is nothing like it.”

“We hope that the sessions and guests at this year’s festival allowed the campus and community to appreciate this important relationship [between arts and science] in a deeper way,” says Associate Professor of Theatre Arts Laurie Kinckman, who is the festival coordinator.

# CAPTURING CHAOS

## Hawkes' photographs comment on environment's future

One of the strengths of the visual arts is the way they can communicate complexity, says UWL Assistant Professor of Art Kate Hawkes.

Hawkes latest series of 12, large-scale photographic works captures the complex, overwhelming and

**“Our future on this planet is dire and I wanted to make artwork about what this unique moment feels like.”**

KATE HAWKES

incapacitating emotions that arise as people ponder the planet's precarious environmental future.

Her series of works, “Anthropocene,” literally means the present era during which humans are actively altering the global ecosystem. The art was displayed this winter at the Paul Watkins Gallery at Winona State University. The series was also featured in an exhibit at Gallery 19 in Chicago last fall.

The series was inspired by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report released in 2014, which Hawkes felt changed the public dialogue surrounding climate change from prevention to adaptation or mitigation.

“I wonder, how do we reconcile



*Kate Hawkes*

this fact?” she says. “Our future on this planet is dire and I wanted to make artwork about what this unique moment feels like.”

The works combine layers of photographed, massed-produced, disposable goods such as candy and cheap trinkets. The images create an alternate sense of space, depth and reality. Some items are clear while others are blurred. Some resemble something else. The visual befuddlement is a metaphor for the emotional, conceptual and ethical confusion and turmoil surrounding climate change.

“I think we are looking at an

inevitable ending and we know it on some level, and that breeds a very complex anxiety,” she explains.

Hawkes received a CLS small grant in spring 2015 for materials for “Anthropocene.” She also received a Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council (SEMACE) 2015 Individual Artist Grant to exhibit in Winona.

Hawkes says maintaining a professional exhibition practice directly informs her teaching because the

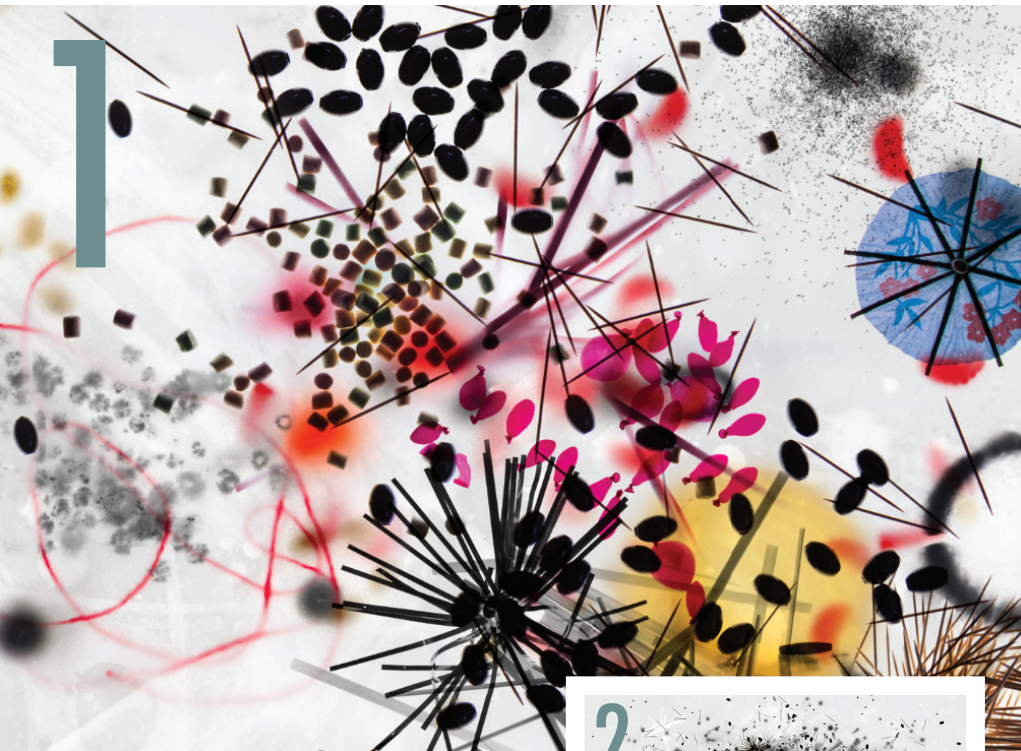
goal for students is to become professional artists who exhibit their works publicly.

“Each body of work and each exhibition presents its own set of unique challenges — no two are the same,” she notes. “So, the more experiences I have, the more I am able to share and help my students think through their own exhibitions and studio practice.”



## THOUSANDS OF POPPIES

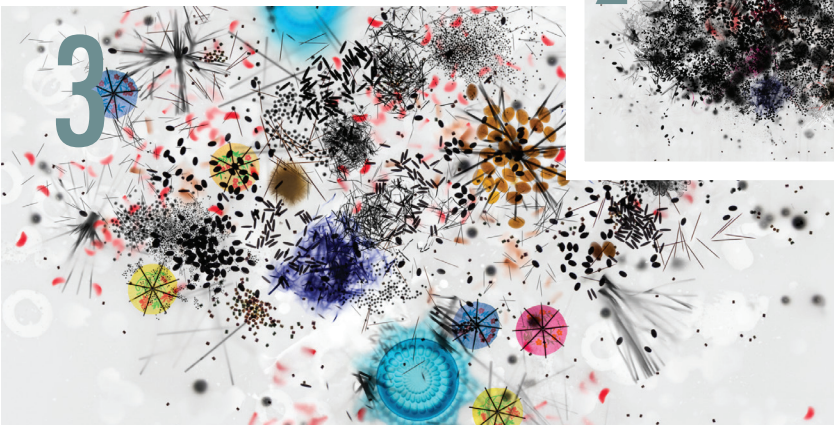
An exhibition “Thousands of Poppies” filled the Weber Gallery in Winona this winter. The exhibition included a collaborative installation of thousands of tissue paper poppies made by UWL faculty, including Misha Bolstad, Art; Kathleen Hawkes, Art; and an animation of poppies by Karl Kattchee, Mathematics.



1. “*The Theory of Everything*” was the first piece in the “Anthropocene” series by Kate Hawkes.



2. Some of the works from “Anthropocene” are loose metaphors and others are very direct. The piece “*Shade Reservoir*” by Kate Hawkes is based on Los Angeles reservoirs being covered with small black balls to prevent water from evaporating. The black balls can be seen from space.



3. Hawkes’ piece “*Midway*” is about the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, also visible from space.



See more of Hawkes’ art at <http://kathleenhawkes.com>

# OBAMA WATCHERS



## Faculty members collaborate on research related to Obamas

One would think UW-La Crosse's Obama scholar would be first in line to see the president speak on campus.

But when President Barack Obama addressed a crowd of about 2,400 people at UWL July 2, 2015 — the first time in university history that a sitting president visited campus — Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Administration Ray Block couldn't get a ticket.

"My co-workers in the Grants Office gave me a ribbing for being an Obama scholar who missed the event," he says.

Nonetheless, Block, has no shortage of insight on Obama. He's been doing research related to the President since 2008.

"His campaign caught my eye immediately — not just because of his race, but because he had amassed so much initial popularity despite being a relative newcomer to national politics," says Block.

Block and Assistant Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Christina Haynes, have both researched the Obamas. Haynes has published about the politics of Michelle Obama's TV appear-

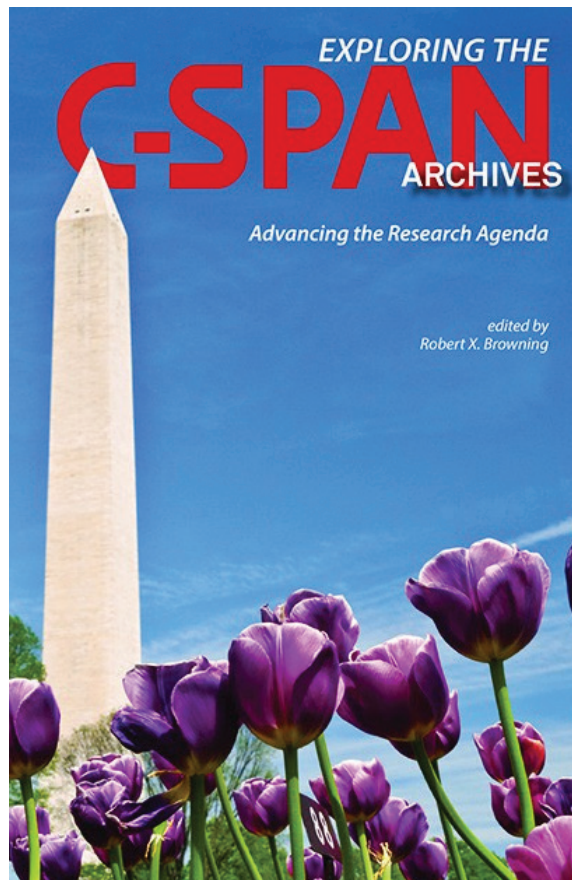
"His campaign caught my eye immediately — not just because of his race, but because he had amassed so much initial popularity despite being a relative newcomer to national politics."

RAY BLOCK

President Obama spoke to a large crowd in the REC July 2, 2015. It was the first time in UWL's history that a sitting president visited campus.

*INSET LEFT: Associate Professor Ray Block is an identity scholar who often uses public opinion surveys to study political behaviors or attitudes. He studies how identities like race, ethnicity, gender, ability, and sexuality influence citizens' political actions and thoughts.*

*INSET RIGHT: Christina Haynes is an assistant professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Her specialty areas are: African American women, black feminist thought, academic achievement and feminist geography.*



**Click here**  
for more about the Michelle Obama book at “Exploring the C-SPAN Archives: Advancing the Research Agenda.”

ances. Block has written several articles about the influence of race on attitudes about Barack Obama. He's looked into factors such as the role of racial considerations in vote choice and the potential influence of an Islamic sounding middle name — “Hussein” — on candidate preference in the 2008 election.

Haynes and Block also recently collaborated on two papers regarding Michelle Obama. The first, published in 2014 in the “National Political Science Review,” looked at how the first lady's TV appearances affect her popularity ratings. The second is

about how she uses media exposure to advocate for policy.

Funded by a research grant from the C-SPAN Educational Foundation, the paper is becoming the chapter of a book series expected to be published early this year, “Exploring the C-SPAN Archives: Advancing the Research Agenda.” The chapter is an analysis of the first lady's political speeches and other communication from two of her major policy initiatives.

Block and Haynes argue that the first lady makes three rhetorical “moves” when she discusses her

“Let's Move!” and “Joining Forces” programs. They include: emphasizing family/motherhood as a unifying identity, reassuring the public that she is “just like everyone else,” and blurring the lines between her private life and her public persona.

“We hope that our study opens a space for other scholars to explore how Michelle Obama uses mom-in-chief rhetoric to counteract — and perhaps transcend — negative stereotypes of African-American women while advancing her political causes,” they write in a summary of the book chapter.

# LatinX

## UWL author explores Latina/o college student leadership

**U**WL faculty member Adele Lozano is providing the higher education community with a different perspective on college student leadership. She's doing that through her book, "Latina/o College Student Leadership: Emerging Theory, Promising Practice" published in December 2015.

"I hope this book will encourage higher education staff and faculty members to move beyond traditional notions of leadership and support Latinx students as they navigate the college environment while maintaining their cultural values."

ADELE LOZANO



*Adele Lozano is a lecturer in the UWL Student Affairs Administration Department.*

Lozano, a lecturer in the Student Affairs Administration program, says her career working with first-generation Latino/a students was the inspiration for the book — the first to specifically explore leadership from the perspective of Latina/o students, staff and faculty members. The book combines research, leadership models, essays,

practices and more.

"I hope this book will encourage higher education staff and faculty members to move beyond traditional notions of leadership and support Latinx students as they navigate the college environment while maintaining their cultural values," she says.

Lozano says she will use the book to teach her students — master's level students who will enter the student affairs field and work with an increasingly diverse student population. She is also developing a course — Latinx Students in Higher Education.

Latina/o students are now the largest racial and ethnic minority group in higher education. It is essential for student affairs practitioners to understand the diversity of the Latina/o student population, says Lozano.

"We must get away from the traditional 'deficit' view of Latinx students and instead, recognize their unique strengths while supporting their development as leaders," she says.



### What is LatinX?

Some student groups are changing their names to use "LatinX" instead of "Latino" and "Latina" to include all possible gender and sexual identities.



# Making Music

Professional opera singer returns for master class, performance

*Professional Opera Singer Franco Pomponi, who attended UWL in the '80s, goes through a breath support exercise with UWL student Catherine Purdy during a master class in October.*

Music major Catherine Purdy stood on Toland Theatre's stage in front of her peers singing "V'adoro Pupille." Standing beside her was UWL alum Franco Pomponi, a professional opera singer, who was helping her work on breathing techniques.

"The breath is as important musically as the notes," Pomponi coached while leading Purdy in a breath-support exercise.

Pomponi returned to campus for a weekend in October to perform at "A Grand Night for Singing," part of the Music Department's Music Gala, a fundraiser for music scholarships.

It was Pomponi's idea to connect with up-and-coming singers from campus, like Purdy, giving them a rare opportunity for one-on-one advice from a professional in a master class.

The renowned singing actor attended UWL in the early 1980s. Pomponi completed studies

at the Juilliard Opera Center in New York City. He was the first recipient of the DeRosa Prize, the Center's top achievement award.

Pomponi's New York debut came as Escamillo in "Carmen" at the New York City Opera. He joined the Metropolitan Opera the following season and performed numerous roles at The Met. Since, he has played numerous leads in operas internationally and the U.S.

The UWL Music Gala was sponsored by Richard Record; CLS Dean Julia Johnson; College of Liberal Studies; State Bank Financial; E & C: Endlessly and Constantly; Connie Smith; UWL Foundation and its Community Engagement Committee; Stifel Nicolaus; and Sue La Crosse.

# EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATOR

## Alum earns state organization's highest honor

Lynn Sessler Neitzel, '90, was introduced to world languages at the family dinner table. Her father regularly invited his international business partners to join them for traditional Wisconsin fare.

"It was fascinating to spend time with them," says Sessler Neitzel. Her interest in world languages and cultures was solidified at UWL when she studied abroad and eventually earned degrees in secondary education and French.

**"From the first class I took, [professors] helped us form personal relationships with the language and culture. I loved UWL. It was the perfect fit for me."**

LYNN SESSLER NEITZEL



*Lynn Sessler Neitzel, '90, curriculum and assessment coordinator at Blackhawk Technical College in Janesville and a Japanese language instructor through CESA 9, received the 2015 Distinguished Educator Award from the Wisconsin Association for Language Teachers.*

Sessler Neitzel became a foreign language teacher and spent nearly two decades volunteering for state and national organizations that support other foreign language teachers. This included leadership positions such as president of the Wisconsin Association for Language Teachers. For her service, she earned the association's highest honor in November 2015 —

the Distinguished Educator Award.

"Over the length of her career, Lynn has been an articulate spokesperson and advocate for world language study at all levels and has worked tirelessly to improve the learning and teaching of world languages as a means to further cross-cultural understanding," says UWL Associate Professor of Spanish Jean Hindson, who had Sessler Neitzel as a student.

Early on it was evident Sessler Neitzel had a gift for foreign language pedagogy, says Hindson. Sessler Neitzel saw the gift of teaching in her UWL French and foreign language methods' professors who she calls "amazing."

"From the first class I took, they helped us form personal relationships with the language and culture," she explains. "I loved UWL. It was the perfect fit for me."

She is also grateful for the teaching organizations, which offered her support, fresh ideas and teaching tools.

"They made me a better teacher and that came full circle to my students," she says.





# HONORED HISTORIAN

## Prof earns national recognition, again

### About the American Historical Association

The association offers prizes honoring materials for scholarly and professional distinction. For 2015, the association recognized 38 winners from more than 1,500 nominations. Since 1896, the association has conferred more than 1,000 awards. The names, publications and projects of those who received these awards are a catalogue of the best work produced by the historical profession.

Professor of Latin American History and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Víctor M. Macías-González, received the American Historical Association's Equity Award in January. The honor cites him for successfully recruiting and keeping under-represented racial and ethnic groups in the history profession.

Macías-González teaches world history, Mexican and Latin American history, as well as classes on Hispanics in the U.S.; Modern Spain; Women, Gender, and Sexuality in Latin America; and the U.S. Cold War. He is a specialist on the Mexican aristocracy and its material and social culture.

"Dr. Macias-Gonzalez provides his students with comprehensive guidance through their educational experiences while requiring very high standards from those who study with him," says Associate Professor John Grider, chair of the History Department. "His high standards are paired with a sincere concern for his students that goes beyond the classroom. He has a true interest in their success as students and in their future success once they leave UWL."



*Professor Víctor M. Macías-González received the American Historical Association's Equity Award in January.*

Macías-González has taken a specific interest in working with under-represented and first-generation students. He helped design UWL's Eagle Mentoring Program in 2008, a retention initiative for under-represented, under-privileged second-year students in the arts and humanities.

This isn't the first national recognition for Macías-González. In 2013, he received the Wisconsin Professor of the Year Award, and the UW Board of Regents Diversity Award in 2015.

*Jim Theler “retired” in 2010, but the emeritus professor and archaeologist continues to do research, give public talks, lead nature hikes and much more.*

# STILL DIGGING THE COMMUNITY

Professor emeritus continues to educate well into retirement



Ask Jim Theler why he continues to teach, present, give tours and do research six years into retirement, and he'll look back with wide, somewhat surprised eyes.

“It’s what I do,” he says.

What the professor emeritus and archaeologist has done for the last 40 years is help people understand the history of the land and how it connects to the environment today. Moreover, he helps people see how the two topics are deeply intertwined. The more people understand about the land’s history, the more likely they are to preserve it, he says.

“I’m very concerned about what we are doing to the environment today,” he says. “I see a lot of takers and not many caretakers.”

Theler is definitely a caretaker. He has restored his own land —72 acres on the north fork of the Bad Axe River in Wisconsin’s Vernon County — to its natural oak savanna where 236 diverse species of plants have been identified. This habitat is so rare that less than one hundredth of one percent of places like it still exist, says Abbey Church, conservation director with the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC).

On his land, native plants and pollinators from 9,000 years ago, which had disappeared because of invasive species, are thriving.

“He has put so much work into his property and brought it back,” says Church. “Every time the conservancy visits that property, we find a new

**“I’m very concerned about what we are doing to the environment today. I see a lot of takers and not many caretakers.”**

JIM THELER

species that hasn’t been identified before.”

Theler worked with MVC on a conservation easement of his property in 2010, meaning it cannot be subdivided, mined, developed or clear



## AN ACCOMPLISHED ARCHAEOLOGIST

In 2014 the Wisconsin Archeological Society, a statewide organization of interested professionals and non-professionals, honored Theler with a 307-page Festschrift issue of *The Wisconsin Archeologist*. More than 20 authors, both colleagues and former students, contributed 17 papers covering a range of topics related to Theler's research interests.

Jim Theler played a large role in establishing Eagle Eye State Natural Area, adjacent to his property. The site is home to important archaeological resources such as effigy mounds, rock shelters, village sites and a campsite dating back to A.D. 1000.

cut in the future. Not only did Theler provide this land resource for future generations, he also continues to be a tremendous knowledge resource, says Church.

Theler also leads presentations and hikes related to archaeology and the natural environment. He speaks to landowners about artifacts and archaeological resources on their land, as well as his experience setting up a conservation easement. His expertise in tiny land snails, and their importance in understanding environmental change, has helped guide MVC's and other organizations' land management and public use plans.

He still publishes and presents papers, writes reviews of regional and national journals, and attends

conferences and national meetings of archaeologists.

Theler continues to venture to UWL's Archaeology Center two days a week, and heads up to his desk on the main floor where he works on research projects with students analyzing animal bones.


On a Monday morning, he holds up a tooth of a modern dog, comparing it to a 700-year-old tooth found on a highway project in Onalaska. A simple tooth can create a thumbnail sketch of what the environment was like long ago and how things have changed over time, he says.

Since retirement, he has continued to explain that concept to K-12 teachers as a leader of the National Endowment for the Humanities

Summer Institute for Teachers, an archaeology education opportunity for educators on campus.

This continued commitment to education is no surprise to Kathy Stevenson, a colleague and Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center (MVAC) operations manager, who first met Theler as a graduate student at UW-Madison.

"It's what we always knew he would do," says Stevenson. "What he is doing in his retirement is a reflection of the approach he brought to his teaching, research — and everything. Archaeology has always been his passion, and he loves to share it with people who are interested."



*Rob Wessler taught music education at UWL for 28 years. Since he retired in 2000, he has traveled worldwide learning and teaching.*

# THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

Emeritus music faculty member travels the world to teach, learn

**M**usic may not be written, created or moved to in the same way in other parts of the world, but it is still the universal language, says Rob Wessler, a UWL associate professor emeritus of music education.

Since retiring in 2000, Wessler has twice traveled to Scotland to coordinate student internships for the UW System's Wisconsin in

Scotland Program. He taught English in China and directed a children's choir in Haiti. He has been to Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Vietnam, Estonia, Latvia, Netherlands, Greece, Turkey, England, Northern Ireland, Sweden, Belgium, Spain and Macao.

Wessler recalls his first day teaching English at a university in Guilin, China. He drew a picture of the U.S. on the blackboard — outlin-

ing the redwood forest, gulf stream waters and New York island. Then, the class practiced their English by singing Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land." Singing became a powerful tool during his teaching there from 2004-05. "They loved to sing," he says.

However, in China music is written differently — using numbers and dots on a horizontal line with



*Rob Wessler, a UWL associate professor emeritus of music education, with the children's choir "Les Petits Chauteurs," The Little Singers. He has directed the choir in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, for 15 years.*

no notes or staff. Despite the differences in China and wherever Wessler traveled, he found people sang and enjoyed music just as they do in the U.S.

Many Haitians Wessler met had a deep love and appreciation for music. It was an obvious component of their everyday lives, he says.

Wessler has directed a children's choir, "Les Petits Chauteurs" — The Little Singers — at a summer music camp in Port au Prince, Haiti for 15 years. A traditional, festive music in the country is Rara — a heavily rhythmic and exciting music made with drums, maracas, bamboo trumpets and metal pipes. Saturday evenings, the campers enjoy dancing to traditional Haitian music. While Americans might dance to it by following the fast, driving beat, the Haitians let their bodies naturally move to the slow, fluid motions of the overlying melody.

**“Music [in Haiti] is internalized. It’s in their bones, their hearts and souls.”**

ROB WESSLER

“Music there is internalized. It’s in their bones, their hearts and souls,” he explains.

He also enjoyed hearing the music traditions of Scottish culture. Since the early coal mining days, pubs of Scotland were a place for participatory musical entertainment called “folk clubs.” People gather in “function” rooms and each takes a turn leading a folk song, poem or some form

of artistic expression. Wessler, who coordinated internships for the Wisconsin in Scotland program there in 2001-02 and 2006-07, took students to the folk clubs with something to perform.

Wessler says every student should be required to live and study abroad. It broadens appreciation for not only the diverse music, but also culture and traditions. And, it gives an edge when entering the job market. With international experience, one begins to learn how people in cultures outside the U.S. think.

“It changes your life and gives you such a new perspective on the world,” he says. “I look at politicians who talk past each other most of the time. They look at people from different cultures and think they know them. They don’t know them. That is what living in another country is about. It’s about connecting.”



# Inspiring Instructor

Scholarship honors long-time CLS lecturer

**E**lise Denlinger approaches teaching with a spirit of discovery. She helps students question the status quo. She inspires them to speak out and be change agents in the community.

Those who work closely with UWL Senior Lecturer Denlinger say it is evident that she genuinely cares about each person who enters her classroom.

Now, a scholarship in her name

will help support these students for years to come.

James Parker, professor emeritus of history and Denlinger's husband, established the scholarship in Denlinger's name with help from her sister, Rebecca Denlinger, and Rebecca's partner, Trish Henry.

"She is an extremely modest person, so she wouldn't have done this or suggested it," says Parker. Yet Denlinger's contributions to UWL

over the last quarter century merit recognition, adds Parker.

Denlinger has taught on campus since 1991 in the departments of History; Modern Languages; and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; as well as the English As A Second Language (ESL) Institute.

She earned the College of Liberal Studies Excellence Award in Teaching for Instructional Academic Staff in 2008, and is consistently one of the

top-rated instructors the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, as well as other departments, notes Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Jodi Vandenberg-Daves.

About 55 people from across the university attended a reception to honor Denlinger, contributing to her scholarship and bringing the total

**“I’ve walked by her office while she is explaining a concept to a student and she has such patience in helping them understand. She helps students to really get the concepts and understand the evidence behind them.”**

DEB HOSKINS

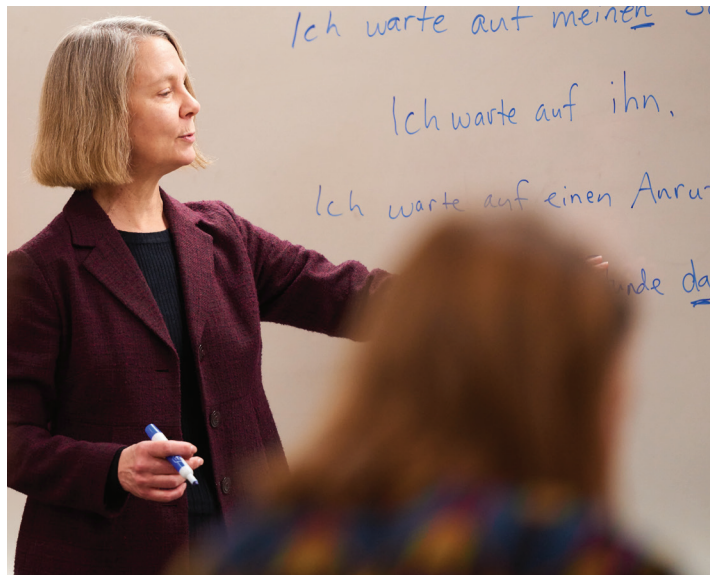
amount to more than \$10,000. The scholarship will support students studying German or Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and will be awarded for the first time in April 2017.

Denlinger is known for her caring attitude toward students. She teaches an introductory course in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Department that challenges students to think critically about society's rules about gender. While seemingly a tough topic, she approaches it with a spirit of discovery, says Associate Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Deb Hoskins, who is also the department chair.

just questioning their place in the world, see the professor who inspired them to speak out for justice cheering them on in the audience,” notes Vandenberg-Daves.

Denlinger has become a “gold mine of information” for the department. She reads widely and constantly, providing up-to-date information



*Elise Denlinger, a senior lecturer at UWL, has been teaching on campus since 1991.*

“I’ve walked by her office while she is explaining a concept to a student and she has such patience in helping them understand,” says Hoskins. “She helps students to really get the concepts and understand the evidence behind them.”

Denlinger supports students inside the classroom and out, adds Vandenberg-Daves. She spends countless hours meeting with them during office hours and has attended every production of Awareness Through Performance, the campus’ student-driven social justice theater project, since 2005.

“Many of the students who write scripts and share their experiences around discrimination, violence and,

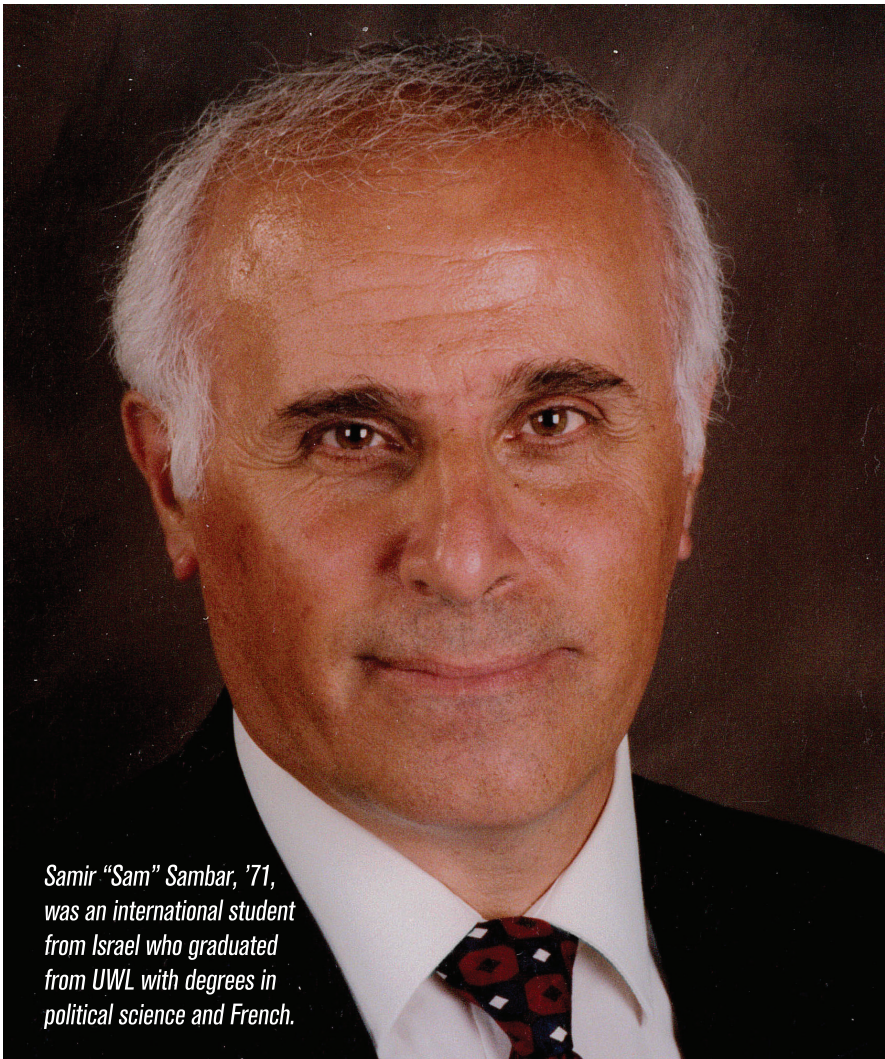
on everything from sexual assault statistics to reproductive rights, say Hoskins and Vandenberg-Daves.

In addition to honoring Denlinger, the scholarship is a way to show students how faculty support them, says Parker.

“These scholarships have become even more imperative in an era in which the state’s share of support for students has diminished to create an intolerable and indefensible debt load for students,” he says.

# RETURNING THE GIFT

Alum creates international student scholarship to give others the same opportunity



*Samir "Sam" Sambar, '71, was an international student from Israel who graduated from UWL with degrees in political science and French.*

Samir "Sam" Sambar came to Wisconsin in 1967 from Israel after watching high school friends and classmates — one after the other — leave for college at UW-La Crosse.

They all heard about a full

scholarship from the Wisconsin legislature for high-achieving international students. A man from La Crosse initially told Sambar's friend's brother about this scholarship after he met him on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

"It opened the flood gates," explains Sambar.

About five people from his small, Catholic school in Haifa, Israel, came to the Coulee Region in the late 1960s. Sambar came a few years later and his brother, Homer, followed — all earning the Wisconsin legislature program scholarship covering full tuition.

Now Sambar, of New Berlin, Wisconsin, wants to give other UWL international students that same opportunity. He donated \$10,000 to the UWL Foundation to start a scholarship for UWL international students; the first recipient was awarded spring semester.

"UWL was the ideal place for [international] students to come," explains Sambar. "There was this welcoming spirit. People wanted to help you and form friendships. That's why I'll never forget La Crosse."

Sambar says coming to the





*ABOVE: Samir Sambar, second from the left in the back row, poses with International Student Organization members in the 1968 UWL Yearbook.*

“UWL was the ideal place for [international] students to come. There was this welcoming spirit. People wanted to help you and form friendships. That’s why I’ll never forget La Crosse.”

SAMIR SAMBAR

U.S. never would have been possible without the scholarship. As it was, he had to stay in Israel a few years after high school until he could save enough to pay for his own flight to the U.S. and additional expenses like housing and books.

Although leaving home came with some apprehension, Sambar says UWL quickly became a “home away from home.” Classmates who had come before him had stayed after graduation and were settled in the area, creating a strong support network.

“They were my protectors,” he says. “They made [adjusting] easier than I expected.”

Sambar liked the small-school atmosphere where he could develop strong relationships with

other students and get to know his professors. He was involved in French Club and an international student association. He met great mentors, like Political Science Professor Joe Heim, who helped him apply to graduate school at Marquette University. Sambar later earned a master’s in international relations and went on to work at United Parcel Service where he made a career for 30 years, retiring as a supervisor.

“La Crosse offered me a scholarship, the experience and the friendships — some which I still have today,” says Sambar. “I was also fortunate to go on to work for a good company. I want to give that same chance to someone else.”

# STORY TIME

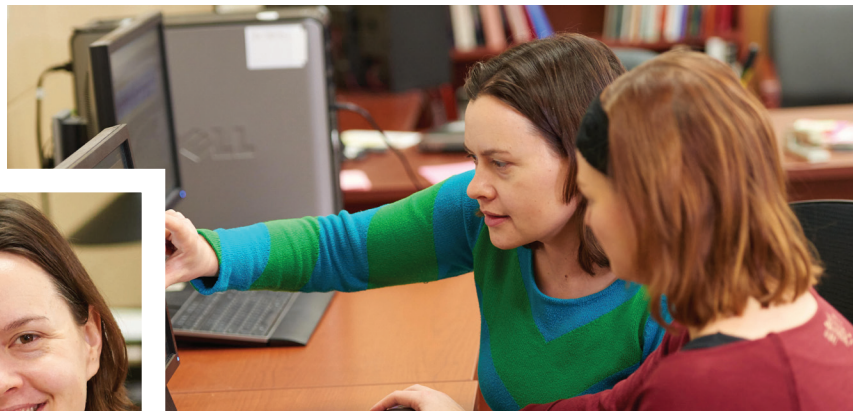
## Oral history recordings a 'campus, community resource'

She's dedicated to connecting hundreds of voices from La Crosse's past to today.

Assistant Professor of History Julie Weiskopf became the UWL's Oral History Program executive director on July 1, 2015. She says along with continuing to digitize UWL's collection of 600 oral histories, she and her student staff want to make them more widely known and accessible.

"This program is a major way we can serve the wider La Crosse community, preserve community memory and make it accessible," Weiskopf explains.

The Oral History Program, housed in a small room on the third floor of Wimberly Hall, also helps history students translate their education into grounded skills. Student workers carefully index interviews ranging from people looking to prevent unionization at La Crosse's rubber mills in the 1930s to recol-



*Assistant Professor of History Julie Weiskopf, left, is UWL's Oral History Program new executive director. Here she works with student Rebecca Schnabel to digitize oral histories. Once digitized, they're stored in Murphy Library's Academic Resource Center.*

lections of UWL graduates spanning 100 years. The interviews open the door into the lives of average, everyday people.

"Oral history captures the ordinary and insists on its importance," notes Weiskopf. "It tells us so much about the fabric of peoples' lives and the diversity of the community during a particular time in history."

She hopes new efforts to upload all of the interviews onto a computer server will make them easier to access. Copies are available to anyone showing a compelling interest.



**Click here**  
to learn more about  
**THE UWL ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM,**  
a research arm of the History Department, has more than 600 recorded oral histories dating back to 1968.



## LISTEN TO A STORY

After returning from the Army, Paul Pappas rented a room and lived in the YMCA in La Crosse for about six years. His story is one from UWL's oral history collection that created the "Hear, Here" project.



# Most Improved

## ROTC program at UWL earns brigade honor

*Lt. Col. Jane Brannan Tamboli, professor in the UWL Military Science Department. The UWL ROTC received the 2015 Most Improved ROTC Program for its logistics, administration, recruiting and retention, and operations.*

**T**he 3rd Army ROTC Brigade has honored the UWL ROTC program for excellence in programming.

The Eagle Battalion received the 2015 Most Improved ROTC Program for its logistics, administration, recruiting and retention, and operations. This is the first time the battalion has received the award.

Along with students from UWL, the Eagle Battalion includes students from Viterbo University, Winona State University and St. Mary's University in Winona. The 3rd Army ROTC Brigade includes 41 ROTC programs in a seven-state region throughout the Midwest.

"I am truly honored by this award. It is a testament to the hard work of the cadre and cadets," says Lt. Col. Jane Brannan Tamboli, professor in the Military Science Department. "We have a new cadre team that is

knowledgeable, committed and energized. This validates our efforts and reinforces our commitment to train the next generation of Army officers."

The Eagle Battalion includes 61 cadets who take military science classes in addition to traditional college classes. This year, 11 cadets will be commissioned as second lieutenants after graduation and serve in the active Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard.

Two of the cadets were named distinguished military graduates for being in the top 20 percent of cadets nationwide based on high academic scholarship, evidence of high moral character, military aptitude and demonstrated leadership ability.

"These distinguished graduates are also a testament to the support received from all four universities," notes Brannan.



Find out more about UWL's ROTC program at [www.uwlax.edu/rotc](http://www.uwlax.edu/rotc)

# SNAP!

UWL Theatre Department's  
spring production of "Singin'  
in the Rain" in pictures

See the schedule of upcoming theatre production at:  
[www.uwlax.edu/theatre](http://www.uwlax.edu/theatre)



# CAPSTONE

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## ON THE COVER

Artwork from metalsmithing studio during the third annual SAC Creative Imperatives in March 2016. The theme of the event was "Curiosity & Wonder: The Intersection of Art and Science," closely tied to the focus of this issue of the Capstone.



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